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Slayer by Trade



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Chapter 1 by Glendo

When most people ask for a hero to fell a foul beast torturing the land, they always expect someone...taller. Being a dwarf, as you can imagine, it is somewhat difficult therefore to project a heroic image. That's why I let my axe do the talking.

For as long as the hairs in my beard I've been hunting down dragons, ogres, giants, and other miscellaneous pests to plague the kingdoms of this flat land. As a secondary business I tan the hides and offer leather goods, but that is only a minor matter compared to my countless victories over the legions of evil.

Well, I say it's a minor matter, but since that eccentric old wizard came by...nothing's been the same.

I told myself the last thing I wanted to do was get myself mixed up into a the business of a sorcerer, yet the haggard elder had the wise aura around him as of one you could not help but feel curious towards. He leant on a gnarled staff, one I assumed to have been imbued with a destructive power, as he peered at me through chipped spectacles from beneath his wide-brimmed hat and chuckled to himself.

"State yer business! I've got better things ta do with me time than listen to ye sages!" I feigned annoyance, yet he must've been able to tell I was interested.

"Well, my vertically challenged friend, I believe I have a task for you..."

Chapter 2 by Glendo

Immediately I leaned in, but he just shook his head and continued on. I was interested. What would he ask?

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Looking at the wizard once more I noticed a slight tear in his robes. Now, if the wizard was wise, held extreme power, was harmed and was coming to me that must mean that something was coming my way.

"Okay, what type of task do you have in mind for me. I have slayed dragons, faught in several wars and I have escaped from near death by dark magic" I brag. "Surely I can do what ever you have in mind."

The wizard's hands grasped his stick tighter as he leaned down to hover be my ear. At least being a dwarf meant that many had to kneel down before me.

Pushing a white strand of hair away from his eyes the wizard whispered into my ear. "If you complete this task I will reward you with whatever you wish. Money, gold or even eternal life".

He paused and searched my eyes for any sign of weakness or fear. He didn't find any.

"My friend, your task for you is..."he continued, before stopping as if he couldn't bear to say the following words.

"Well, what is it?" I ask. Dwarfs do become slightly annoyed if you don't give them the answer, suspense isn't something I enjoy.

"I need you to slay your sister".

Chapter 3 by Cefor



I blink.

"My sister?"

The wizened sorcerer nods, a gleam in his eye, and a toothy grin on his face.

"That's right," he said. "Your sister needs to die."

I blink again, this time with a start.

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"Well? What do you say?"

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"Look, I know that ye haggard wizard folk like to mess wit' people's minds an' all, but I gotta be honest wi' ye..."

He leant in, the eager grin widening.

I shrugged my shoulders.

"I don't have a sister, ya daft bugger!"

We stared at each other. His intense aura I had read earlier to be wise came across now as... eccentric. His eyes held a wildness about them that I didn't like, but hell I couldn't really talk, as my own countenance was rarely anything other than 'crazy'.

"You... don't have a sister?"

"No. You'd 'ave thought that a wise man like yerself would'a checked up on tha' before coming on all strong like to a hunter like me."

"Yes... wait, no! You have a sister! I saw it, in the smoke... the flames, they do not lie, dwarf!"

I cracked a knuckle or two underneath the table.

"I'm tellin' ya, old man, I don't have time fer games!" I rose from my stool, my hand falling to the haft of my axe. "Get out o' my sight."

"No, no, your sister is—"

The door to the tavern burst open with a breath of fresh air, which made most everyone in the place curse the one who'd fallen inside. She slammed the door shut behind her and smiled around at the room, waving a hand as she did so.

The wizard turned and stiffened at the sight of her.

She stopped.

"My eyes narrowed. I thought I saw something in the shadows, but when I turned to look, she was gone."

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"She must be slain."

He stood, grasping his staff in two hands. "Begone, foul wench!"

The lady in question stared at the old man in a grey robe waving a giant stick around. I have to be honest, I would've done the same thing she did...

She burst out laughing.

"Foul... wench... hah," she said between gasps. She wiped a hand across her eyes. "No, no, I'm sorry, I shouldn't... hahaha!"

The wizard didn't like that. He lifted his staff towards the ceiling, just barely missing the iron chandelier, and cried out in a language I hadn't heard before — if you'd asked me, I would have said it sounded like he'd made it up on the spot, but... well.

His staff smote the straw-strewn stone flags of the tavern floor, his voice cracking on the final syllable of the words he spoke.

The woman stopped laughing and started screaming, tendrils of what could only have been solid smoke were winding themselves around her limbs.

The screaming stopped. It was then I realised I had my axe in my hands, I took a small amount of comfort from gripping the well-worn handle.

The wizard began to relax... but he stepped back from sheer shock.

The woman stepped out of the bindings, her glare suited more to an avenging angel than a woman a bare second earlier writhing in pain.

"Such bindings do not touch me, sorcerer. You should have known this."

Her eyes slid past the old man for a moment and locked onto mine.

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The wizard hissed.

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Unlocked

What?

Chapter 4 by Cefor



Clearly, they were both out of their minds. But I, as a master of wit, responded with a pronounced, "Huh?"

She ignored me. My own sister! Supposedly.

"Sorcerer, you have hounded me for long enough," she said. "I'm ending it."

She drew her hands up into a position near her head, looking, for the life of me, exactly like a puppeteer holding the strings of a marionette. Her eyes narrowed, and her voice whispered of violent, horrendous things in the dark. I looked away, shielding myself from the visions even the barest audible sound of her words brought to mind.

The wizard raised his magic stave across his chest, like the bar of a door, and began a chant of protection, his words tumbling over one another as they came out of his mouth. The staff began to smoulder, its core glowing like the dying embers of a fire.

The room began to grow uncomfortably warm. The patrons silently watching the spectacle before them dared not move nor speak lest the terrible powers gathering before their eyes were turned in their directions.

I couldn't quite decide if I was protected from the wrath of my 'sister' and this mad wizard who believed I had the skills necessary to murder a clearly powerful witch. Perhaps the very reason the wizard had come to me meant that I would be the second target of her magic. Or perhaps, if I were to be extremely lucky, the pair would have mistaken me for a taller, less well-bearded man of the human persuasion?

Stranger things had happened.

I began to edge away from the group, my mind racing, my body cold despite the heat.

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I kept one eye on the duelling pair, and the other on what was behind me. I reached a space next to a table full of, until now, raucous men.

"Dwarf," one of them whispered. He actually managed to whisper, too. I imagine his throat was as constricted as my own. "What do we do?"

I spared him a full-faced glance. He was terrified. I distinctly smelled something suspiciously like urine from the men, each sat as they had been when the two murderous wizard-types had began throwing magic around, and I barely blamed them. No matter how many monsters one catches, slays, and turns in for a bounty, there is always the fear underlying every action you make.

"Pray," I grumbled. "Pray tha' they don't make a mistake and kill us all!"

The men collectively whimpered, like a dog that's kicked by its master.

I went to move, but a sound whipped my head around.

The wizard had dodged to the side, his staff spinning as it deflected a blast of raw magic aimed for his chest. It cracked into a table and almost bounced out of his hands. When it hit the grimy wood of the table it let out a sound like thunder in a stormy night's sky.

The lance of raw magic he'd deflected hit the ceiling away on the other side of the common room, and anyone who watched its passage had an after-image burned into their sight like they had seen a bright light in the darkness, or glanced askance at the sun. The ceiling groaned under the splash of magic energy and sprouted thorny tentacles. They waved in the darkness, causing the people under it to scream in terror and bolt.

One woman in her blind panic ran straight for the witch. The sorceress used one hand to gain control of her body. She flipped her around and forced her to run, still screaming, straight for the wizard. He had a two handed grip on his staff once more, and thrust it forward in a lunge to snan the incoming natron's head back. She droppped like a pupnet with its strings cut

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The ball of flame hit the front door and disintegrated it, a rush of fresh cold air burst into the room. A few of the patrons closest to the door made a mad dash for freedom, but they had taken only a single step before they were caught by the witch's dark magic.

They turned, as one, to face the wizard. His gnarled knuckles grew white on his staff.

"Using these people as your puppets. Abominable," he said, and spat on the straw scattered around the floor.

The four people she had taken control over opened their mouths and spoke at the same time, an eerie chorus:

"Abominable you call me, yet you are the one who will take the lives of innocents."

I took a moment to breathe deeply. The fresh air certainly felt good. My senses were already battle-sharp. The air drove away the clinging fingers of the ale I'd been four pints through. I hefted my axe and rested it on my shoulder, not exactly ready to swing but easier than it being on the floor.

There wasn't a way to leave, that much was obvious. Whoever she was, she had incredible power over the mind and body. And whoever he was, he held great power himself. They were a danger to me and everyone else in the town.

Their focus on me had been broken, but I couldn't expect it to last. What would it take for them not to round on me as an adversary?

The witch reappeared amongst her posse of puppets, a cruel grin widening her face. She was in the position of most power, and they both knew it. The wizard had a hard look about him. He would be able to level the playing field by removing her objects of power — the innocent people in the room.

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I had my axe.

And my wits.

And not much else.

Chapter 5 by Windlion



There are moments in battle when, having no clear thought of a way to win, one has to commit to do something mad and throw the bones. I stepped forward from the huddle in the corner.

"Mages! Cease!" I roared in my best dragon-your-hours-are-numbered voice – at least, I hoped it seemed so and not like the quavering, terror-blind mouse in my gut. "If we must be wiped away like dust by this death duel, are we not at least allowed to learn what cause demands our ending under your boots?"

Both combatants wheeled to face me, and the look in their eyes sent the brethren mice behind me scattering for safety.

Before my nerve could fail me, I spun to face the witch and snarled, "Fair Lady --(try to never miss a chance to compliment a woman, I say, or a man for that matter, sometimes helps break their focus on killing) "-- you called me brother? Be it so! And being so, I claim right as your sibling to know what sore grievance exists between you!"

They both stared at me through so much bottled-up rage, I feared that my beard would burst into flames from the heat. But the sorceress had shuddered when I called her family, and now she nodded.

"Be it known to you -- *brother* -- that this. this *scum* intentionally caused the grand confection I

intend to solve my burning ambition." See more of Story Wars

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Snarling, she raised her arms again ... but before she began her chant, he cried out in anger and despair.

"It was an accident! The doorknob slipped, and the door knocked helmets out of my hands when it slammed on my foot!"

Could her fury have been said to grow more terrifying? I could not say so, for the strength left for me to feel terror had already blown away.

"IT. WAS. OUR. WEDDING CAKE!" she thundered.

Chapter 6 by Windlion



My sister's words were like a blast wave echoing around the room.

Women gasped in horror and men's faces turned to stone, their flint-eyed stares all turning toward the wizard.

A warrior keeps his senses in such moments, though, and I saw in the wizard's terrified and confused expression an opportunity -- so I struck.

"Wizard! You dishonor me if you have dared to think of marrying my sister without my approval. Not -- " sensing a spark of rage rising in the other combatant -- "not that I would stand in the way of her will, but I hold you contemptible if you fail to do what is proper!" I raised my ax to attack, and made to step forward.

"No!" he shrieked. "No, please stay! I am innocent, I did not know until this moment that she was preparing a cake for our wedding, or, or even that we had set a date! And I would never have done that without ~~without proving my qualities to you first~~, and said as much to her, even

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He stopped to catch his breath, leaning his head against the doorframe.

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...I do, and I thought he's

When he looked up again, he turned to face my sister. "Althea. Althea, the years we have shared together ... you are all that I treasure in my life, I have often spoke of my desire to stay with you for all time, and I have welcomed our talks about choosing a wedding date ... but my fears consume me."

There was a quiet hiss of disapproval from several women and rumbles from one or two men in the room, myself included. *Years he's been with her, he says, and still he can't commit?*

Chapter 7 by Aaron August



"Your fears consume you? What fear do you have? Have I ever done you wrong? Have I ever done anything but loved you?" Althea looked at the wizard with tears in her eyes. She lifted her hands toward the wizard muttering the beginning of a spell.

"Please, Althea I didn't know what else to do."

"Let's hear 'im out," I shouted trying to stall as long as I could. I did not want to see the old wizard die. Althea grimaced but let him continue. Even she wanted to hear what he had to say.

"Dwarf, you say you never knew you had a sister correct?"

"Ay!" I agreed not knowing where he was going with this.

"Well, I can explain why. You see, your parents were not both dwarves. In fact, your mother was a human, a sorceress."

I looked at the wizard a little shocked. I had seen my mother growing up and she was definitely a dwarf.

"She disguised herself as a dwarf after she met your father," the wizard continued. "They had two children. You and, and Althea. "

I must have blushed at the mention of the name.

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However, the poor man
was probably your mother.

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I began to think back to the conversations my parents had when I was young and it all began to make sense. They had hidden my sister from me and I had never even known. "But that still does not explain your fears for marrying her."

"I couldn't marry her because..." He stammered. "because..."

"Just get it out already!" Althea screamed.

"I was sent to kill you, Althea."

"What?" Althea backed away she could not believe what she was hearing.

"I was sent to kill you. You were feared by many for your power and so I was sent to stop you. But I couldn't get myself to do it. I fell in love with you and I enjoyed every second we spent together. Still, I had heard of the prophecies. I knew what was to come. The dangers if you lived..."

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